

REMARKS

The Office Action notes that claims 1-3 are pending in the application. The Applicant does not wish to amend or cancel any of the claims. Therefore, claims 1-3 remain pending in the application.

Claims 1- 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Banno et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,313,574; "Banno").

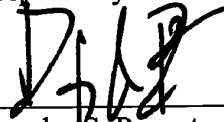
The Applicants respectfully submit that the claims of the present application are allowable over Banno because the priority date of the present application precedes the filing date of Banno. The present application has an international filing date of January 25, 2000, based on International Application PCT/JP00/00354. The International Application claims priority under the Paris Convention of Japanese Application Number 11-16524, which was filed on January 26, 1999. Therefore, the effective filing date of the above-referenced application is January 26, 1999, which is the date of the priority Japanese Application. Our 903 Form indicates that the USPTO received a copy of the priority document. Nevertheless, for the Examiner's convenience, we have included a copy of the Japanese patent issuing of the priority document. As pages 1 and 9 depict, the present application is fully disclosed in the priority document.

A comparison of the filing date of Banno to the foreign priority document shows that Banno et al. was filed in the United States on July 16, 1999, which is after the priority date of January 16, 1999 of the above-referenced application. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that Banno et al. does not qualify

as prior art against claims 1-3 of the present application. Accordingly, claims 1-3 are allowable in their present form.

In view of the aforesaid, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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